



Winter Backcountry Use

Crater Lake National Park receives an average of 44 feet of snow every year. During the winter, trails and unplowed roads provide skiers and snowshoers with access to open slopes, dense forests, and breathtaking views, making Crater Lake ideal for both day-trippers and backcountry visitors. Since 93% of the park is managed as federal wilderness under the provisions of the Wilderness Act, opportunities for solitude abound.

Winter can also be a challenging time. Blizzards, avalanches, and steep, icy slopes are just some of the hazards to be prepared for during the winter months. Make safety your first consideration.

Rules and Regulations

Sno-Park permits are not required to visit Crater Lake during the winter. Sno-Park permits are required for skiing in the adjacent National Forests.

Skiing or snowshoeing on any plowed road or parking area is forbidden. Please put on your skis or snowshoes only after leaving the roadway.

No overnight lodging is available in the park during the winter months, and roadside camping is not permitted. Backcountry camping is allowed.

All backcountry campers must register at a park visitor center for a free permit before camping. Campers must ski or snowshoe to their campsite. The following areas are closed to camping:

- Within one mile of any plowed road
- Within 1/4 mile of Boundary Springs, Thousand Springs or Sphagnum Bog
- Within 100 feet of any water source

- Within visibility of any other backcountry campers or ski trails

Entering the caldera is extremely dangerous and is strictly forbidden. Stay well back from the edge of any drop-off. Snow overhangs, called cornices, can fall away without warning.

You are responsible for your own safety. Our volunteer ski patrol operates only on weekends. Even during patrolled periods, not all trails and possible routes can be canvassed.

Pets are not permitted on any ski routes or in the backcountry. Pets are permitted on leash up to 50 feet from plowed roads, and parking areas.

Open campfires are allowed only if "dead and down" wood is used to fuel the fire. Most down wood is covered by deep snow this time of year.

Maximum party size is limited to 8 people. Groups larger than eight must break into smaller groups, travelling and camping separately.

Other Considerations

You will need to bring your own skis and snowshoes, or rent equipment prior to arriving in the park. Rental equipment is not available inside the park.

All trails in the park are ungroomed. The more popular ski trails are marked. The Rim Drive around Crater Lake is closed and unplowed during the winter. From November to April it is a popular ski route.

Snowshoers should stay off of and out of ski tracks as a courtesy to skiers.

If you have questions about skiing or snowshoeing at Crater Lake, or current weather and trail conditions, please check our website at www.nps.gov/crla. You can also call the Steel Visitor Center at (541)594-3100. It's open daily from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Pacific time.

In the park, three sources of information may be available. The Steel Information Center is located by Park Headquarters, three miles below the rim. The Rim Information Desk, open weekends, is located in the Café Building at Rim Village. The Canfield Ranger Station, also near Headquarters, has varying winter hours.

Skiing or Snowshoeing
around the lake

For those desiring a winter backcountry adventure in a spectacular setting, skiing around Crater Lake on the unplowed Rim Drive is an unforgettable experience. The trip is about thirty miles long and typically requires three to five days, depending on weather.

Although a trip in either direction is possible, most people start at Rim Village and proceed clockwise around the lake to Park Headquarters, with a net loss of 700 feet of elevation. Groups with only one car can use the Raven Trail to connect between Park Headquarters and Rim Village.

Winter conditions at Crater Lake can vary, often changing quickly. Backcountry visitors should be prepared for all possible conditions. Prior to leaving for an overnight trip, your group will be asked to complete a backcountry trip form and equipment checklist.

Avalanches and icy conditions can create hazards at several points along the Rim Drive. Please familiarize yourself with avalanche safety precautions before your trip, and check on current weather and snow conditions upon your arrival at Crater Lake.

Distances and Elevations on the Rim Drive	Location	Total Mileage	Distance from last	Total Climb (feet)
	Rim Village	0.0 miles	0.0 miles	0
	Discovery Point	1.1	1.1	50
	Lightning Springs Trailhead	2.3	1.2	50
	Watchman Trailhead	3.8	1.5	200
	North Junction	6.1	2.3	200
	Cleetwood Cove	10.7	4.6	450
	Wineglass	13.5	2.8	350
	Skell Head	14.9	1.4	400
	Cloudcap	17.9	3.0	600
	Kerr Notch	21.4	3.5	600
	Dutton Ridge	24.0	2.6	650
	Sun Notch	25.5	1.5	650
	Vidae Falls	27.0	1.5	650
	Park HQ	30.0	3.0	

All mileages and elevation changes are along the Rim Drive and do not consider any avalanche detour routes.

Overnight Winter
Parking

Backcountry users may park in either the Park Headquarters area or at Rim Village in specific areas. You are responsible for ensuring that your car is parked in a designated overnight parking area. If your vehicle is left in a non-designated area, it may be seriously damaged by snow removal equipment or towed at your expense. You will be required to provide vehicle description(s) and license plate number(s) when you receive your backcountry permit.

The road from Headquarters to Rim Village is plowed on a regular basis. However, due to heavy snowfall, this section of road may close for hours or days at a time. Keep this in mind as you decide where to park your car. If you need to ski between Rim Village and Park Headquarters to return to your vehicle, please use the Raven Trail. Any people on the road during snow removal operations would be placed at great risk by the hazards of large snow removal machines.